



FOI0145-0094
Department of State

EXCISE
TELEGRAM

CONFIDENTIAL

S/S-0:TRREYNDERS:E0
2/13/80 22522
S/S-0:MFROPE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

2/14/86

ADP

EXISTING MARKINGS

INSUFFICIENT MARKINGS

FOR EXEMPTIONS

B1 1.825

ROUTINE

ALDAC

CFR REPORT, INFORM CONSULS, CINC/SHAPE FOR POLADS ONLY

E.O. 12065: GDS 2/13/86 (REYNDERS, THOMAS R.)

TAGS: XX, US

SUBJECT: (U) CURRENT FOREIGN RELATIONS, ISSUE NO. 7,
FEBRUARY 13, 1980

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5. (U) PA--SUPPORT FOR INCREASED DEFENSE SPENDING RISES FURTHER IN WAKE OF AFGHANISTAN; LARGE MAJORITY NOW VIEWS U.S. MILITARY POWER INADEQUATE RELATIVE TO USSR

(U) THE SOVIET INVASION OF AFGHANISTAN HAS INTENSIFIED RECENT TRENDS IN AMERICAN ATTITUDES TOWARD DEFENSE SPENDING AND U.S. MILITARY POWER VIS-A-VIS THE USSR: (1) A LARGE MAJORITY (69 PERCENT) NOW FAVORS AN INCREASE IN DEFENSE SPENDING, A LEVEL OF SUPPORT NOT APPROACHED SINCE 1950; AND (2) A COMPARABLE MAJORITY (64 PERCENT) NOW WISHES TO SEE THE U.S. MILITARILY STRONGER THAN THE USSR. FURTHERMORE, THE PROPORTION WHO PERCEIVE THE U.S. AS MILITARILY WEAKER HAS RISEN TO THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF RECENT YEARS.

(U) BETWEEN EARLY 1950 AND EARLY 1980, THE PUBLIC'S ATTITUDE TOWARD DEFENSE SPENDING SWUNG IN A PENDULUM-LIKE CURVE--FROM A PEAK IN 1950, IT BOTTOMED OUT IN 1969, AND SINCE THEN HAS RISEN STEADILY TO A NEW PEAK THIS YEAR. THE SHIFTS IN OPINION CAN BE TRACED BY COMPARING THE RESPONSES TO SIMILARLY-WORDED QUESTIONS ASKED BY THE GALLUP POLL IN 1950 AND 1969 AND BY THE NBC POLL IN 1979 AND 1980.

(U) NBC ASKED: "DO YOU THINK THAT THE DEFENSE BUDGET FOR NEXT YEAR SHOULD BE INCREASED, DECREASED, OR SHOULD IT BE KEPT THE SAME AS IT IS NOW?"

	1/29-30 1980	1/17-18 1980	12/11-12 1979	9/10-11 1979	7/69	3/50
	(PERCENTAGE)					
INCREASED	69	63	51	38	8	64
KEPT SAME	19	21	31	36	31	24
DECREASED	5	6	9	16	52	7
NOT SURE	7	8	9	10	9	5

(U) THE PUBLIC'S INCREASING DISSATISFACTION WITH U.S. MILITARY CAPABILITY IS TRACED THROUGH CHANGING RESPONSES TO TWO QUESTIONS POSED BY THE HARRIS AND NBC POLLS THAT EMPLOYED SIMILAR WORDING. RESPONDENTS WERE ASKED ABOUT (1) THEIR PERCEPTION OF U.S. MILITARY POWER RELATIVE TO THE USSR, AND (2) THEIR PREFERENCES REGARDING U.S. MILITARY POWER RELATIVE TO THE USSR:

PERCEIVED U.S. MILITARY STRENGTH RELATIVE TO USSR.

1/29-30

1980

10/79

7/78

12/76

(PERCENTAGE)

U.S. STRONGER	12	14	18	21
ABOUT EQUAL	32	42	43	43
U.S. WEAKER	47	40	31	27
NOT SURE	9	4	8	9

PREFERRED U.S. MILITARY STRENGTH RELATIVE TO USSR

1/29-30

1980

10/79

7/78

12/76

(PERCENTAGE)

U.S. STRONGER	64	49	43	48
ABOUT EQUAL	31	43	45	42
U.S. NOT				
- AS STRONG	3	6	8	6
NOT SURE	2	2	4	4

{U} BETWEEN LATE 1976 AND LATE 1979, AN INCREASING PROPORTION OF THE PUBLIC CAME TO PERCEIVE THE U.S. AS MILITARILY "WEAKER" THAN THE USSR. OVER THE SAME PERIOD, 90 PERCENT OF THE PUBLIC DIVIDED FAIRLY EVENLY BETWEEN THOSE WHO PREFERRED TO BE "STRONGER" THAN THE SOVIET UNION AND THOSE SATISFIED TO BE "AS STRONG".

{U} THE POLL CONDUCTED IN LATE JANUARY 1980 SHOWS THAT THE PUBLIC'S PREFERENCES AND PERCEPTIONS REGARDING U.S.-SOVIET MILITARY STRENGTH WERE MARKEDLY ALTERED BY RECENT EVENTS. THE PROPORTION OF THE PUBLIC PREFERRING THAT THE U.S. BE "STRONGER" AND THE PROPORTION PERCEIVING THE U.S. AS "WEAKER" ROSE APPRECIABLY. MILITARY PARITY WITH THE SOVIET UNION IS NOT SATISFACTORY TO A SIZEABLE MAJORITY OF THE AMERICAN PUBLIC. MORE THAN EVER BEFORE, AMERICANS WANT TO BE "NUMBER ONE" MILITARILY, BUT PERCEIVE THE UNITED STATES AS CURRENTLY BEING "NUMBER TWO".